



VIA WIRELESS

Novelized by Thompson Buchanan From the Successful Play of the Same Name

By WINCHELL SMITH, FREDERIC THOMPSON and PAUL ARMSTRONG

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CHAPTER XII. A WIRELESS MESSAGE.

FRANCES and Sommers stared at each other, both at first unable to speak. Perhaps speech was unnecessary, for the face of each told plainly how much this chance meeting meant.

Of course it was the girl who recovered first. With an arch smile that was very close to tears of happiness she held out her hand.

"So you haven't quite forgotten me, have you? You do know my name! Won't you shake hands?"

The man came to her eagerly, seizing her hand and holding it with a grip that almost crushed it, while she looked all the things that he could not just then say.

"I can hardly believe it's really you," he exclaimed. "It's so strange to find you away off here."

Frances' heart was pounding with great throbs of happiness. He loved her! That was plain, very plain. Every look, every gesture, showed it. And with the knowledge there came to the heart of the girl a great confidence, a content that made her able, woman-like, to hide all her feelings and make him work for everything that in reality already belonged to him.

"Oh, mother and I are on a cruise," she said lightly. "We've been here several days. We didn't have an idea that we should see you. What a lucky chance!"

No one from her manner could have guessed the weary days of waiting for that cruiser, now just arrived.

"Is your father with you?" asked Sommers.

The girl shook her head.

"No; father couldn't come. Mr. Pinckney is with us."

The naval officer's face hardened ever so little.

"Oh, yes, of course," he said, and, inside, his evident jealousy made the girl just that much happier.

"Yes, of course we had to have some one," she agreed. "Won't you sit down? I'd quite given up all idea of ever seeing you again. I'm glad we've met."

"I didn't know that you would ever want to see me again," ventured Sommers as they sat down.

The girl's face flushed. This was the time when there must be some explanation, and her sense of awkwardness made her feel that the explanation should come from her.

"I've wanted to see you ever since that night in the furnace room," she said at last, "to ask your forgiveness."

Sommers shook his head.

"No; I have nothing to forgive, Miss Durant. It is I who must ask forgiveness. If I could only make you understand how much I've regretted that night and my outburst!"

The girl smiled with unconscious tenderness.

"You had every right to ask what you did. I had given you the right," she said softly.

The man sighed.

"Nothing could give me the right to act as I did that night," he said bitterly. "I've been punished for it."

Impulsively she held out her hand to him across the table.

"Let us forget all about that," she said. "I went to the works on a very silly errand that night. Some time I'll tell you all about it. We mustn't waste time about that now, though, when we have just a few minutes together."

"A few minutes!" exclaimed Sommers. "You don't mean that I'm only going to meet you to say goodbye?"

Frances nodded.

"I'm afraid that's it for the present," she said. "We're sailing this afternoon."

"And I'll be on sea duty for two years," sighed the man bitterly.

It was just as hard for the girl, but the knowledge that she was loved helped to buoy her up.

"Then we must make the best of the time we have," she said. "Tell me what you've been doing since I saw you last."

Sommers shrugged his shoulders.

"Nothing to tell. Been at sea, that's all," he said.

"But surely you do something at sea?" persisted the girl.

He was still too disconsolate at the thought of parting to quite lift himself into her mood.

"Oh, we eat and sleep, and I've taken up wireless a little in my spare moments. I expect you know why. I've been interested in it ever since you gave me my first lesson in your workroom."

"Can you send and take?" she asked eagerly.

"A little, but I am slow at it."

The girl was leaning on the table now in her eagerness, for already an idea had occurred to her.

"I can send well now," she exclaimed. "I spent lots of time in the Irvesa's little wireless room. It seems so much more wonderful on sea than it did on land. Oh, the mystery of it all!"

"Think of being away off tossing about in a boat, with nothing but sky and water anywhere in sight, and to have one who is—she hesitated a moment, and a bright flush rose as she went on, correcting herself quickly—"I mean, of course, if there should be

some one very dear to you on that same ocean. You don't know where

how near or how far, but by touching a key you can send your thoughts flying in every direction, and the little wave currents bearing your message will quiver around him, brush by him, perhaps touch his cheek in passing, and you wonder if he feels it."

The man was looking at her queerly.

"By Jove, that's strange!" he said, low, as she finished.

Frances laughed tentatively.

"Why, have you ever felt a message dancing about you?" she questioned.

Sommers shook his head.

"No, but the Roanoke did. It was very singular. I assure you. I was in the wireless room one night a couple of weeks ago talking to the operator."

"The girl leaned forward with sudden, tense eagerness—"when suddenly, without a call or getting our response or any preliminary that the well regulated message indulges in before coming to you, over our recorder there came a flicking in a wonder message."

His voice softened to a note of tenderness.

"It was a message of love—the tenderest and sweetest I've ever known. No one could tell for whom it was intended. I don't think it knew itself. It had gone astray."

"It was sent by a woman—it must have been—and I found a home with us. Not a man on that ship but carries it now in his heart. May I tell it to you?"

The girl was looking at him, her heart in her eyes.

"A love message? Of course," she said softly. "But how extraordinary!"

Sommers nodded.

"Wasn't it? It seemed almost cruel that such a dear little message, so innocent and pure, should have been thrown out into this hard old world of ours to dash through the air, through heat and cold and storm, vainly seeking an owner; going on and on, miles and miles, in every direction, until at last it became weak and faint—and died."

"But, you see, it didn't die," added the girl tenderly.

"No," said the man. "By some chance as it flew by us we caught it, and we loved it. That message will live until the last man on that ship has fought his fight."

"And it was sent to no one in particular?" questioned the girl.

"To you," he answered.

"To me?" she exclaimed, startled.

Sommers shook his head, smiling.

"No, no, that was the address. Listen; to you, my own one. I send this little message overflowing with my love."

He was bending across the table eagerly, speaking low the wonder message that had come to him; giving it back, his own declaration of love to the girl.

"Yes," said she softly, for she understood.

At her tone an intuition came to him. He caught her look. He, too, understood. And so he dared misquote a little.

"Should it ever reach you, would you know it came from me?"

"No, no, it wasn't that," exclaimed Frances sharply. Then she stopped abruptly, the crimson rushing to her face.

"What's the matter? Didn't I get it right?" he asked, with pretended innocence.

The girl, caught, now was trembling.

"Why, how should I know?"

The pretense of innocence was hopeless. He shook his head, smiling tenderly.

"How should you know? Because you sent it. Oh, that message was like you, only—"

"Only what?" she asked.

He looked at her with a queer smile.

"Only every other fellow thought it was like some one else. Did you send it to any one in particular?"

The girl lifted her eyes to his with a sudden shy daring very sweet to see.

"How was it addressed?" she asked.

The man's hands were trembling as he leaned toward her.

"Tell me, please," he begged.

Faltering, she looked down.

"To you," she said very softly.

Without a word, careless of who might see, the man of action caught

her hand and, leaning across the table, kissed her.

"Lieutenant Sommers?"

The same cool voice which had startled Frances earlier now made the two start apart guiltily. Sommers looked up angrily. The big man with the shrewd eyes was standing beside the table, his face as unemotional as though carved from stone.

"What do you want?" asked the naval officer sharply.

"My name is Bradley," said the man, "United States secret service. I've brought a message to you from Washington, lieutenant."

"Well?"

"You are wanted at Washington, lieutenant, to answer some questions at the court of inquiry."

With an involuntary exclamation of fear and sympathy, Frances stood closer to her lover. He was staring at the secret service man, astounded.

"A court of inquiry?"

Bradley nodded.

"Yes, sir. Your gun exploded three weeks ago. Two men were killed outright and three mangled. One will be blinded if he lives."

"It isn't your fault," she said. "I know it isn't your fault."

His hand caught hers with a quick grip of thanks for the renewed courage her sympathy and faith brought him.

"Won't you leave us now?" he said low. "I'll see you and tell you what he has to say."

Reluctantly the girl bowed and hurried away into the hotel to wait there alone until her lover could see her. When she had gone Sommers turned quickly to Bradley.

The secret service man had been standing there, his face expressionless, but his shrewd eyes taking in and his keen brain analyzing all that had transpired.

"Why was I not informed of this before?" asked Sommers, still partly dazed.

"They decided to keep it from you until you came ashore," replied the secret service man. "How it all happened will be decided at the court of inquiry. I have been on the case since the accident occurred. Your gun stood the test at the proving ground. It's my opinion that it was killed in the tempering bath."

A wave of light swept over Sommers. He saw everything now. It was all plain. He understood why a drunken foreman had been left in charge of the job. He knew why Pinckney had been so solicitous. He realized why, finally, he himself had been assaulted in the last desperate effort to keep him from witnessing the transfer of the gun to the tempering bath.

Finally he understood why Frances had come there that night. She must have suspected and she had come to save him. The thought of the dastardly trick enraged him.

"It was killed in the tempering bath! I swear it was!" Sommers exclaimed fiercely. "Pinckney was in the room that night at the Durant works. He's here—here at this hotel. I'll settle with him."

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night, what is the time?

2. If five-sixths of an article is sold for what two-thirds of it cost, what is the gain or loss per cent?

3. A's age is 2-3 of B's, but in 5 years it will be 5-7 of B's. What are their ages?

4. The difference of time between Washington and St. Petersburg is 7 hr. 6 min. 20 sec. If the longitude of Washington is 77° 20' west, what is the longitude of St. Petersburg?

5. If I buy a bushel of wheat by Avordupois weight and sell the same by Troy weight for the same price per pound that I paid, what per cent do I gain or lose?

6. If 15 bu. 1 pk. 6 qt. cost \$173.75, how much will 1.5 bushels cost?

7. Add 2-3 of a mile, 1-16 of a mile and 3-16 of a rod.

8. What will it cost at 20 cents a square yard to construct a walk 4 feet wide around a circular pond whose diameter is 60 feet?

GEOGRAPHY.

1. Name and